GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:5142
ANSWERED ON:20.04.2001
AGRICULTURAL TRADE AMONG MEMBER COUNTRIES OF WTO
RAMJI LAL SUMAN;SUSHIL KUMAR INDORA

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have held any discussion with the member countries of the World Trade Organisation to improve the agricultural trade among them;

(b) if so, the details thereof indicating the date on which the discussion was held and outcome of the discussion;

(c) the extent to which the agricultural trade among the member countries of WTO has improved thereafter;

(d) whether the member countries of the WTO are clearly divided in the matter of future improvement programme relating to the agricultural trade; and

(e) if so, the details in this regard and proposed scheme of the Government to have future round of discussion?

Answer

MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN)

(a) to (c): In accordance with the mandate of Article 20 of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), negotiations to further the reform process in trade in agriculture have commenced in the year 2000. These negotiations are taking place in the Special Sessions of the WTO Committee on Agriculture.The 6th Special Session of the WTO Committee on Agriculture was held in March, 2001. India has been actively participating in the discussions taking place in the Special Sessions of the Committee on Agriculture.The ongoing negotiations are in its initial phase and it may take considerable time before these negotiations are concluded. It would be, therefore, rather premature to arrive at any conclusion as to whether any improvement in agricultural trade has taken place due to these negotiations. India has also submitted its proposals in the areas of Market Access, Domestic Support, Export Competition and Food Security with the main objective of protecting its food and livelihood security and also for creating opportunities for exports of its agricultural surpluses.

(d) & (e): The proposals submitted by member countries reflect varying objectives of the member countries in accordance with their positions in world trade in agriculture as well as their domestic policy requirements. The developing countries are, by and large, unanimous that the AoA has not enhanced their market access opportunities. Most of the developing countries have sought substantial reductions in tariffs and in trade distortions being practised by the developed countries before undertaking any further commitments. However, the net-food-importing developing countries have proposed only gradual reductions in subsidies. Many developed countries, on the other hand, have been emphasising that as trade is a two way process, developing countries also have an equal obligation to open their markets without any preconditions, for establishing a fair and market oriented agricultural trading system. There is, however, no unanimity of approach either amongst all the developed countries or amongst all the developing countries.

The Government propose to continue to actively participate in the ongoing negotiations under AoA with a view to project its views and safeguard its interests.